



NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Title I Waiver for School Improvement Grants

Establishment of Minimum Number of Students for PLAS Identification

NDE is applying for a waiver of the definition of “persistently lowest-achieving schools” contained in section I.A.3 of the final requirements for the School Improvement Grants (SIG) program (74 FR 65618 (Dec. 10, 2009)) and the use of that definition in section I.A.1(a) and (b) of those final requirements, as amended (75 FR 3375 (Dec. 21, 2010)). **Specifically, NDE is requesting permission for Nebraska to exclude, from the pool of schools from which it identifies the persistently lowest-achieving schools for Tier I and Tier II, any school in which the total number of students in the “all students” group in the grades assessed [who were enrolled in the school for a full academic year as that term is defined in Nebraska’s Accountability Workbook] is less than 30.** NDE believes this waiver is needed in order to ensure that the identification of a school is both valid and reliable based on a minimum number of students and does not reveal personally identifiable information about individual students in the school. The application process requires public notice and an opportunity for members of the public to comment. The USDE Guidance on School Improvement Grants and the ARRA School Improvement Grant Application can be found at the following link:

http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ARRA/School_Improvement_Grants.html

Comments are encouraged and should be submitted via email to Randy.McIntyre@nebraska.gov by 5:00 p.m. (Central) on February 22, 2010.

NDE believes this waiver will ensure the validity and reliability of Nebraska’s identification of schools as well as protect the privacy of individual students in very small schools. For Nebraska’s identified Tier I and Tier II schools, the SIG program will improve the quality of instruction for students and improve the academic achievement of students. Specifically, implementing one of the four school intervention models in our Tier I and Tier II schools will help us turn around our Nebraska’s persistently lowest-achieving schools in order to improve instruction and raise student achievement substantially in those schools. By identifying schools below the “minimum n” as Tier III schools, Nebraska will enable its LEAs to serve, as appropriate, these schools with SIG funds.

Nebraska assures that it determined whether it needs to identify five percent of schools or five schools in each tier prior to excluding small schools below its “minimum n.” Nebraska will post on its Web site, a list of the schools in each tier that it will exclude under this waiver and the number of students in each school on which that determination is based. Nebraska will include its “minimum n” in its definition of “persistently lowest-achieving schools.” In addition, Nebraska will include, in its list of Tier III schools, any schools excluded from the pool of schools from which it identified the persistently lowest-achieving schools, so that LEAs may choose to serve those schools with SIG funds consistent with the final requirements.